



February 21, 2023

House Education Policy Committee

RE: HF441

Dear Chair Pryor and Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation (MSFG) is a coalition of more than 50 organizations that share a common goal of advancing justice by striving toward a future where every person is free from commercial tobacco's harms and can reach their full health potential. Our commercial tobacco policy work specifically refers to the use of manufactured, commercial tobacco products, and not to the sacred, medicinal and traditional use of tobacco by American Indians and other groups.

We want to thank Representative Kozlowski for their leadership on this issue, and support this legislation to allow American Indian students to carry a medicine pouch in observance of traditional spiritual or cultural practices.

Traditional tobacco is natural, not inhaled or addictive, and has no additives. Traditional tobacco use varies by tribe, and some tribes do not use any sacred or traditional tobacco. Traditional tobacco is different from commercial tobacco. Commercial tobacco products like cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, and chew are manufactured and sold by the tobacco industry. Commercial tobacco products are highly addictive and contain cancer-causing chemicals and additives.

The tobacco industry has long targeted American Indian communities and appropriated the traditional practice. Targeted marketing and policy failures have contributed to American Indian health inequities. In Minnesota, smoking rates among American Indians are at epidemic levels (59 percent), and 42 percent of urban American Indian people who smoke use menthol cigarettes. In addition, 71% of American Indians in Minnesota reported they were exposed to secondhand smoke from commercial tobacco at community locations on a regular basis.<sup>5</sup>

We recognize the importance of traditional tobacco in American Indian communities and will continue to work in partnership with American Indian communities to address the harms of commercial tobacco.

On behalf of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation, thank you for considering this important policy.

Sincerely,

Emily Myatt

*Tri-Chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation*

*Minnesota Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network*

LaTrisha Vetaw

*Tri-Chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation*

Janelle Waldock

*Tri-Chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation*

*Senior Director of Policy, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota*

### About Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

*Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 50 organizations that share a common goal of advancing justice by striving toward a future where every person is free from commercial tobacco's harms and can reach their full health potential.*

*Advocates for Better Health, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Allina Health, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children's Minnesota, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Essentia Health, Eugene Nichols, Faribault Martin & Watonwan Co SHIP, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, HealthPartners, Hennepin County Public Health, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, Lao Center of Minnesota, Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, Minnesota Dental Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Public Health Association, Minnesota Society for Public Health Education, Minnesota Youth Council, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Mowery Communications, LLC, NAMI Minnesota, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health, Public Health Law Center, Rainbow Health, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, Twin Cities Recovery Project, UCare, WellShare International, Winona County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention*

*Find out more at: [smokefreegenmn.org](http://smokefreegenmn.org).*